



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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THOUSANDS OF CALLS SIGNAL NEED FOR SERVICE CENTERS *NEW CENTERS CREATE JOBS, OFFER ASSISTANCE TO CITIZENS STATEWIDE*

NASHVILLE-- Tennessee Department of Human Services Commissioner Gina Lodge officially opened the department's system of service centers today during ribbon-cutting ceremonies in Morristown and McKenzie. A third center, located in Clarksville, will open next month.

Each center employs approximately 70 individuals, primarily college-educated eligibility counselors who answer questions and make changes to cases for clients enrolled in the TennCare Medicaid, TennCare Standard, Food Stamp and Families First programs. So far, nearly 75,000 calls from across the state have come into the two centers. Before the service centers opened, many clients would have had to have visited or contacted their caseworker directly at the local Human Services office before case changes could be made or program questions answered.

"Increasing the efficiency in state government and making it all more user-friendly is what this Administration is trying to do, and these service centers do just that," said Commissioner Lodge. "Our new employees received extensive training, and they are committed to serving some of the most needy citizens in Tennessee."

The Morristown center began taking Family Assistance program calls in mid-November. On December 1, the McKenzie center began taking calls, and that same day the TennCare phone line was switched over to both service centers. The centers average between 6,000 to 7,000 calls a day. Wait times depend on the time of day and average between one to eight minutes. With the opening of the Clarksville center in January, wait times should be eliminated.

"It seems like just yesterday we announced the creation of the service centers," said Lodge. "The speed at which they have come together shows a tremendous commitment to these centers' success by numerous state agencies and the communities in which we are located."

The center's locations were chosen in June and were based on their regions' need for good-paying jobs, as well as suitable, easy-to-move-in locations and an available pool of college graduates.

The service centers take calls Monday through Friday, from 7:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. local time. The toll free phone number is 1-866-311-4287.

Human Services assists more than a million clients each month. For more information on our programs, please visit: <http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv>

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